

GAILLARD (Robert), *Louisiane*, Paris et Saint-Étienne, Éditions  
Dumas, 1947. 556 p. 350 francs

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GAILLARD (Robert) *Louisiane*, Paris et Saint-Etienne, Editions Dumas, 1947. 556 p. 350 francs.

This book purports to narrate the career of La Salle from 1678 to 1683. The author, who gives as a subtitle the word « roman, » apparently feels justified on this ground to take all kinds of liberties with the facts. In this review we shall correct the most glaring mistakes, for to correct them all we would have to write another book in the margin. It is natural that in a book with La Salle as its hero, the Jesuits would fare badly, but, except for the first items mentioned below, we will restrict ourselves to statements that do not deal with the Jesuits.

In the very first paragraph of the book, there is mention of the warehouse the Jesuits at Sault Ste Marie in which, among other things, they kept their « indigo ». Considering that indigo began to be planted in Louisiana in the second half of the eighteenth century, we can judge from such a beginning what the rest of the book will be like. We are also told that there was at Sault Ste Marie a « seminary » where were trained not only ecclesiastical students, but Jesuit novices as well. The Jesuits had no seminary or school of any kind at the Sault. As early as 1678, there was in the West a detachment of the regiment of Carignan-Salières, and the soldiers were fighting the Algonkin, who had massacred « les colons de la région de la prairie du Chien. » The facts are as follows: no detachment of the Carignan-Salières regiment ever went beyond the Iroquois country; the French were always friendly with the Algonkin, and there was certainly no « colons » in the Prairie du Chien region in 1678.

On page 302, a Jesuit of Michilimackinac is made to say: « Vous n'ignorez sans doute pas, monsieur de la Salle, que le R.P. Marquette, qui fonda jadis cette mission, a déjà parcouru le Nord du Mississippi. » La Salle answers: « Peut-être ignorez-vous que je l'ai fait avant lui sans m'en vanter, moi. » Jolliet and Marquette had not only « parcouru le Nord du Mississippi, » but had descended the river for more than a thousand miles. La Salle's answer is merely a romantic license. The first time he ever saw the Mississippi was at the mouth of the Illinois River, on December 7, 1680, more than seven years after the Jolliet and Marquette expedition. La Salle was never on the Ohio either. This is proved by the various names which he gave to the river. First, he called it the Baudrane, and described it as navigable for « barques » to the Mississippi; then he spoke of it as the Ouabanchi-Aramoni; thirdly, the Baudrane became the « Louysine »; and finally, we have the Ohio appearing under the name of the Chucagoa, which was the name given to the Mississippi by Garcilaso de la Vega. La Salle himself admitted, in 1683, regarding the Mississippi and the Ohio: « Je ne sçaurois bonnement dire si ces deux fleuves se joignent. »

La Salle is said to have thought that the *Griffon* could sail up the St. Joseph River, and « avec les inondations, » cross the portage there to the headwaters of the Kankakee. It is quite clear that La Salle had no

previous knowledge of this portage which is near present-day South Bend, Indiana. When he reached the spot on December 6, 1679, it took him a whole week to cross to the headwaters of the Kankakee, with his men carrying canoes and goods on their shoulders. It is likewise untrue that he went to the St. Francis Xavier mission, near Green Bay, Wisconsin. From an island at the mouth of Green Bay, he despatched the *Griffon* to Niagara, and himself followed the west shore of Lake Michigan with fourteen men.

In the voyage to the sea in 1682, Prud'homme is said to have been lost at the mouth of the Illinois River, thus delaying the departure of the expedition. If the author wanted to use the Prud'homme episode, I do not see why he could not have described him as lost in the vicinity of Memphis, more than 450 miles down the Mississippi, which would be according to facts. The strange part of it is that La Salle is correctly said to have been ill on the return journey at Fort Prud'homme. The author is as vague about the geography of the Mississippi as he is about many other details of the expedition of 1682. At the mouth of the river we are told: « Mais l'astrolabe était dérangée et il ne put en aucune manière relever la longitude. » Even if his astrolabe had not been defective, La Salle could not have computed the longitude of the mouth of the Mississippi or any other spot. An astrolabe was used to calculate the latitude, not the longitude.

It is not true that La Salle when « less » than twenty years old was already visiting tribes « où jamais un blanc n'avait posé le gros orteil. » He was born in 1643, came to Canada in 1667, and did not begin to travel until July 1669. He returned to Montreal at the end of September of that very year, and was seen on the banks of the Ottawa River in 1670, where many men before him had « posé le gros orteil. » Not until 1682, at the end age of thirty-nine, did he actually visit unexplored territory. The little bit of scandal (p. 212) about the married woman who was sent by La Salle's enemies « pour le soudoyer, » is taken from a worthless document from which we shall quote below.

Jolliet did not christen the Mississippi « Fleuve Frontenac, » but « Rivière Buade »; and Mississippi is wrongly said to be a Huron name, instead of an Algonquian name. Barrois was Frontenac's secretary, not La Salle's. Tonti's hand was not torn away at the battle of Seneffe, but at the siege of Libisso. The author's only reason for referring to Seneffe is apparently to make some disparaging remarks about Hennepin. Earlier in the book we are told that the Recollect came to Canada « pour satisfaire à la fois son avarice (!), son goût du lucre (!!), sa soif d'aventures et de voyages ».

Throughout the book, whenever Michel Accault is mentioned, the name is spelled « Arrault. » This man is described as speaking Illinois and « Sioux-Dakota, » but La Salle distinctly says that Accault did not know the Sioux language. La Taupine, who is said to be « l'un des plus vieux batteurs d'estrade du Canada », was actually born in 1639, and was consequently forty-three years old in 1682. Pierre Moreau dit La Taupine is

supposed to have witnessed the torture « des Pères [ ! ] Goupil et Jorgues [ sic ]. » Goupil was put to death in 1642, when La Taupine was three years old; and Jogues was martyred in 1646, when La Taupine was seven years old.

One of the many anachronisms in the book is Iberville's planning the discovery of the Mississippi by sea in 1683. Pierre Le Moyne did not think of the Mississippi until 1697. His subsequent career leaves no doubt that the author is indulging in romantic licence, when he makes the sailor embarrassed because his father, Charles Le Moyne, had at one time been friendly with the Jesuits. The coming to Montreal of the cargo of young girls who were to be married, is contradicted by all the evidence.

As for the « congrégation de la Sainte Famille, » the words themselves are taken from the worthless document already mentioned. Gaillard refers to this « congrégation » as follows: « On m'avait parlé d'une congrégation de femmes et de filles, copiée sur celle qui existait déjà à Québec sous le nom de Sainte-Famille et dans laquelle on faisait vœu, sur les Saints Évangiles, de dire tout ce qu'on savait, de bien ou de mal, à propos des personnes que l'on connaissait. Cette Compagnie s'assemblait tous les jeudis dans la cathédrale, la porte fermée, et ces personnes se confiaient, les unes aux autres, ce qu'elles avaient appris ou remarqué dans la semaine. C'était une manière d'inquisition contre ceux qui n'étaient pas dévoués aux jésuites. » The document from which this account is taken and which I have analyzed at length elsewhere (*Frontenac and The Jesuits*, p. 218 ff) reads thus: « Ils ont une prétendue congrégation de femmes et de filles qu'ils appellent la Sainte famille dans laquelle ils font jurer sur les Saints Évangiles qu'on dira tout ce qui se fait de bien et de mal dans les maisons, d'où il résulte un très grand scandale que je dois dire en particulier. Mille dissensions sont arrivées dans les familles à cause de cette assemblée de Sainte Famille qui se fait tous les Jeudis l'après dînée ou il ny a que les femmes et filles qui entrent avec le Pere Jesuite. »

The above errors are but a small fraction of the gross inaccuracies which fill the book. Even in historical novels, such unnecessary mistakes do more harm than good.

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